

James Macak

Dr. Elena Chernyak

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Question 2: *Chapter 9*

Explain the basic premise of social exchange theory and describe one prediction about intimate relationships derived from this theory.

In Social Psychology, there is a theory which attempts to model the commitment level in a relationship. Social Exchange Theory says that “A perspective that views people as motivated to maximize benefits and minimize costs in their relationships with others” (Markus et al. 384). This stems from an economic approach to relationships, in which, each person will weigh their contributions to the relationship and their partners contributions to conclude if they feel rightly treated -- committed. Examples of the reward aspect are feelings of love, companionship, consolidating with their partner in difficult times, sexual satisfaction in a romantic relationship, and spiritual trust. Through research, it was shown that couples currently dating who experienced high rewards in their relationship are more likely to stay together than those who do not. During the early stages for couples, through the honeymoon phase, it was found that social exchange theory is less applicable. Meaning, when people are very passionate, burning for one another, they are less likely to count their actions against their significant others. It is once they pass this

stage that some become petty, for lack of a better word, in their love for the other. At this point, their commitment level is something they may be measuring.

Commitment is outlined in this textbook by the following model. Comparison Level (CL) is used to “refer to this average expected outcome in relationships” (Markus et al. 384). People who have high a CL want more rewarding relationships, people with low, care less about rewards. Comparison level for alternatives (CL<sub>alt</sub>) references “people’s expectations about what they would receive in an alternative situation” (Markus et al. 384). If someone feels their rewards elsewhere would be high, then they are less likely to feel committed in their current relationship. The final element that goes into our commitment calculation is investment. Investment “is something a person puts into a relationship that he or she cannot recover if the relationship ends” (Markus et al. 385). Personally, this sounds more like unconditional love than an investment, but we will stick with the term investment. *Satisfaction*, which is in the final equation is the difference between *rewards*, *costs*, and *CL*. This value is used as the base value of which *CL<sub>alt</sub>* is then subtracted, that difference is then added to *investments*. Finally resulting in the estimated *commitment* value.

Based on this theory, I would predict that couples which have worldly desires are likely to respond in the ways which is outlined. They will in fact, perhaps not initially as described above, but during later points in their relationship, begin a tit for tat downfall in which they will not want to give more than they receive. The theory does help to explain why many married couples end in divorce. If they are seeking pleasure and their spouse is not providing them with pleasure, they look elsewhere and find it. However, for those who do not have their desires in the flesh I do not think social exchange theory is very applicable. Unconditional love means we do not count our rewards and weigh them against our contributions, or at least we should not. Hard

times become moments of testing and strengthening, rather than breaking and turning away.

While not easy, I personally do not think social exchange theory is a beneficial model to live by, nor one I would want to model myself.

### Question 3: *Chapter 11*

Under what conditions should the punishment be most and least effective in reducing aggression? From the perspective of social learning theory, explain why punishment might increase rather than decrease aggression.

Aggression is a sensitive topic. Many people experience some form of aggressive behaviors daily, either directly or in others. Social Learning Theory was developed to comprehensively detail what feeds the development of aggression in a social setting, while having a short definition. "The theory that behavior is learned through the observation of others as well as through the direct experience of rewards and punishments" (Markus et al. 472). Pretty straight forward and well said. Our behavior, including aggression, is not inherent to ourselves, but rather we develop our nature as a result of noticing traits in others and receiving direct feedback of our actions. Initially, many think this is limited to parents punishing their children, or abusive or violent natures at home and school, or the people children hang around. These are all true, but studies show that this is not the entire story. Cartoons, shows, movies, and music that children are exposed to will also have a large influence on their nature growing up. It is important not to overlook these things when the child is developing. Those first seven years are

incredibly important in one's life and have been shown to point the direction for the type of person you will be throughout your life.

Punishment is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, punishment is necessary for one to learn, but on the other hand, it can lead to aggressive and violent natures if not done properly. Furthermore, in the eyes of a child, punishment has far more meaning than it does in the eyes of an adult. Therefore, when parents violently punish their children, the child can perceive their aggression as a "script" for how they should treat others. This is precisely why punishment might increase rather than decrease aggression from the perspective of social learning theory. The environment of the child becomes the punisher, which in their aggressive nature, causes the child to learn from their new social environment a way of dealing with something that directly involves violence. This can be seen in the school system as many bully's act like in their traditional way as a result of violence at home from their elders.

Personally, I think punishment is more likely to increase aggression and anger when the child, or the one being punished, feels their punishment is unjust. Given reason, understanding is far more likely than without. The goal of punishment after all, is to make right for the wrong one did. Helping one understand why they are being punished but then punishing them in the appropriate way and in the appropriate caliber is critical. Punishment should never take the form of violence, especially with children. Adults must lead by example, they must not display hatred during punishment, but love. Parents should punish out of love. This will result in reduction of aggression in the child and will have a domino effect on others. Eventually, the child will develop this just response from being taught properly at home, which can be displayed to others at school or in their social circles. Potentially influencing someone who does not have a supporting family at home to teach them properly.